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RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

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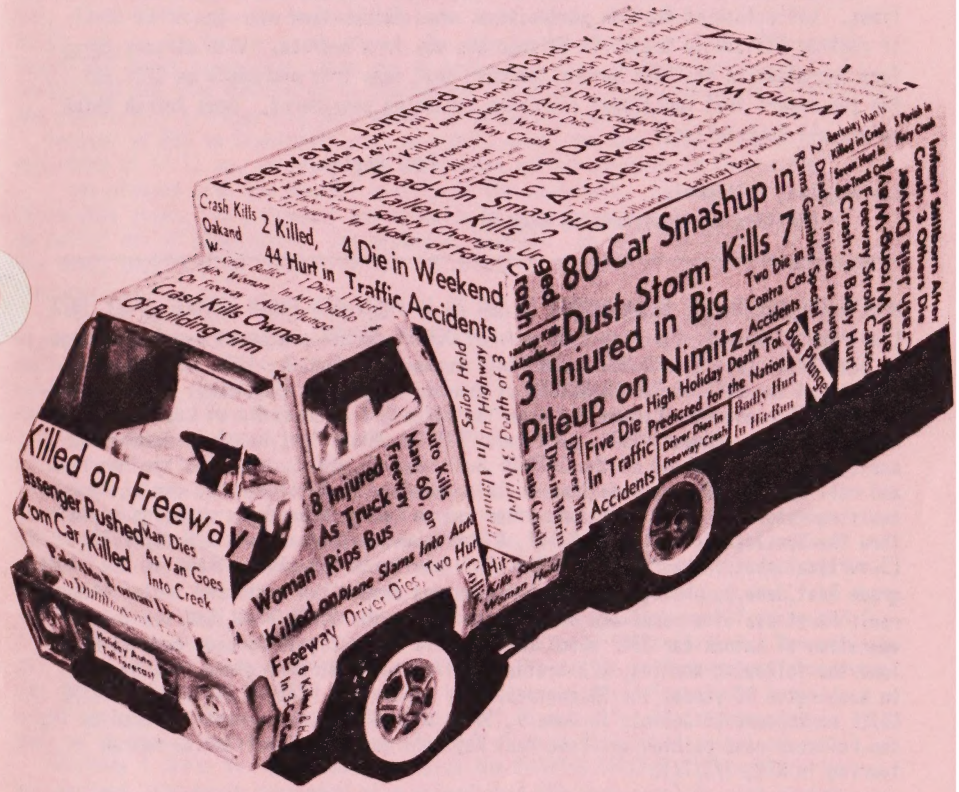
VOL. 3 NO. 6
SECOND ISSUE OF
MARCH 1973
#56



Death Rides the Highways

ON THE COVER: See the editorial article beginning on page 9 for explanation.

LETTERS

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Los Angeles, California

(Letters are continued on page 3)

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that I have had on Amtrak. The scenery on the B&O line is not all that great (the dome windows were filthy, by the way) and there isn't much to do but count the hours to Washington.

The last leg of my Amtrak odyssey was aboard the MERCHANTS LIMITED to North Philadelphia. Although most of the train consisted of Penn Central's dreariest coaches, there were three refurbished cars: parlor-car "General Lafayette," a diner and a coach. The dining car was one of the most attractively appointed that I have ever seen; the crew professional and efficient, and the menu apparently a unique one, as there were several New England specialties including Yankee Pot Roast and Boston baked beans.

A hearty lunch, well prepared and carefully served by skilled waiters, afforded a pleasant entrance into the Quaker City and helped to restore confidence in Amtrak.

--Christopher H. Anderson

Wilmington, Ohio

CANADA NEWS LETTER

THE BIG RUMOR in Toronto right now is that Canadian National has traded its six 8-bedroom-skytop lounge sleeping cars (ex-OLYMPIAN HIAWATHA) for the four full domes Amtrak recently purchased from the Milwaukee Road. The Skytops are supposed to run on the COAST STARLIGHT in the summer and on the Florida trains in the winter...

CANADIAN PACIFIC WITHDREW its dining car from service on the CANADIAN for about a week, but the Canadian Transport Commission forced it back on. While it was off, coach and Pullman passengers crowded into the lunch-counter dome car (Skyline coffee shop) for sustenance...

CANADIAN NATIONAL HAS sharply reduced sleeping car space on its SUPER CONTINENTAL. In winter 1969 it had eight sleepers; in winter 1971 six sleepers; in winter 1972 four sleepers; now down to two or three sleeping cars...

NOW BEING "STUDIED" by Canadian National are the pre-paid meals for dining service for sleeping car and parlor (club) passengers. Probably they'll be eliminated when a combined SUPER CONTINENTAL-CANADIAN train goes into operation next fall. Both CP and CN are said to be discouraging business like mad, so it's likely they'll have a small enough load to fit into one train by that time...

PROBABLY NO "DORMETTE" (heavyweight sleepers) will be used on CN this summer. Day-nite coaches will be used instead, with the total amount of sleeper space reduced...

THERE'S A POSSIBILITY that some Rail Diesel Car runs from Toronto northwest to Bruce Peninsula points will be restored, but there has been sharp opposition in the government to this plan...

THERE'S SOME TALK of restoring the "Newfie Bullet" narrow gauge runs (real name: CARIBOO) with light-weight equipment and about a 13-hour schedule, daylight, across the island of Newfoundland. This has been a real problem for the governments involved, and the Newfoundland opposition felt so strong on the abandonment approval that they asked Queen Elizabeth II to deny royal assent to the order. This, of course, would have destroyed the monarchy in Canada, and caused Canada to leave the Commonwealth if approved, but gives an idea of the depth of feeling...

CANADIAN PACIFIC REDUCED the season of the Seattle-Victoria Princess Marguerite runs. It is now 28 days shorter than the 1971 season, and operates May 11-September 15 only this year (in 1971 it was April 30-October 2)...

PRINCESS OF VANCOUVER on CP's Vancouver-Nanaimo run will go into Burrard drydock in Vancouver in September for a 3-month refit. She'll be re-engined, with 4 GM's of 8600hp total, replacing 4 National diesels of 5400hp total. Her speed will be increased from 14½ knots to 17 knots. All rail on her cardeck will be replaced. While she is in refit, the Princess Marguerite may substitute. The new Carrier Princess, which will carry up to 260 passengers in addition to trucks, will soon go on the Vancouver-Swartz Bay run...

MORE CANADA NEWS:

A BOMB SCARE on Canadian National's SUPER CONTINENTAL in February forced the evacuation of the eastbound train at Nakina, Ontario in 25-below-zero weather. A passenger jumped off the train as it stood in the Nakino station and declared a bomb would explode in five minutes. After a 6-hour search, police gave up and arrested the man, charging him with public mischief. About 150 passengers shivered in the Legion hall while the train was emptied and searched...

THE TURBO TRAIN of CN was reported on a new set of test runs in March on the main line west of Montreal. The train will return to the Montreal-Toronto run some time in 1973, but no date has been set. A large number of engineering changes have been made on the trains to eliminate the breakdowns that plagued them earlier...

THE DOT REPORT, THE PENN CENTRAL PROBLEM, AND THE FUTURE OF AMTRAK

The Dept. of Transportation's long-awaited report on what to do with Amtrak next was released March 15, and the recommendations present a mixed bag. Essentially the report calls for business as usual at Amtrak, maintaining its slow incremental rate of change in the nation's passenger system. This report, basically what the Nixon administration will push for, is extremely important as an outline of where Amtrak will be going in the next years.

The report recommends that Amtrak's government-guaranteed loan capability be increased from $200 to $500 million, and that the corporation be given an open-ended ability to tap this fund for capital improvements without having to go to Congress for approval each year. So far Amtrak has tapped only $50 million of the $200 million it has been promised. This money is important for buying the new equipment that Amtrak badly needs.

At the same time, the DOT said that no expanded service on Amtrak routes should be considered "until existing routes are accorded the resources sufficient to stabilize service and increase ridership." When new services are added, the DOT continued, "decisions should be based on market assessment, ridership, and revenue potential as they relate to costs." The DOT report asked for continuation of Amtrak's program of gradual improvement of services and increasing of efficiency. It recommended that ICC control over route discontinuance should be eliminated after next July 1.

The following routes were recommended for discontinuance: Chicago-Miami (the FLORIDIAN), New York/Washington-Kansas City via St. Louis (the NATIONAL LIMITED), Washington DC-Parkersburg WV (the "experimental" POTOMAC SPECIAL), and the Richmond-Newport News VA segment of the GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY. The last-named route would continue running from Chicago-Richmond, where it would connect with the N.Y.-Florida trains, thus providing Chicago-Florida service in lieu of the FLORIDIAN. The Chicago-Kansas portion of the TEXAS CHIEF would be combined with the SUPER CHIEF during slack travel periods to increase efficiency. The train discontinuances recommended would have to be approved by the ICC, thus delaying them for some months. It seems certain that these routes will still be operating thru the summer, therefore, even if Amtrak does seek to eliminate them.

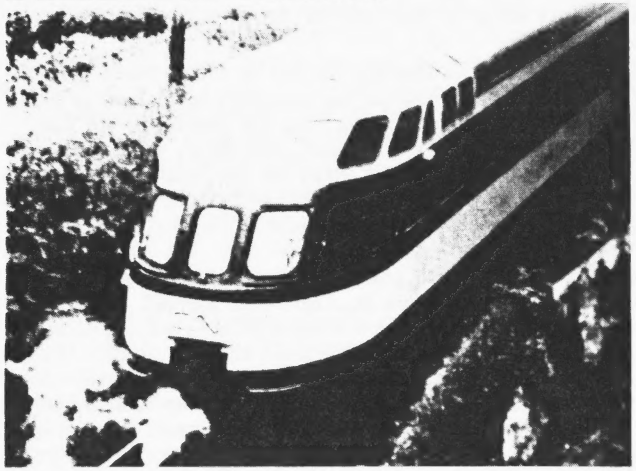
The DOT cited increased ridership and revenues on the nationwide system as plus points indicating its progress and need for continuation.

Hanging over the whole picture of passenger service like a black cloud is the uncertain fate of the Penn Central, an outcome which may be more important in the long run to Amtrak than is the present DOT report. A crisis point is being reached where several competing recommendations are up for argument of their merits, and the judge overseeing the PC reorganization under bankruptcy has demanded that a solution be reached soon. One outcome may be, reports the N.Y. Journal of Commerce (March 26), that Amtrak will be empowered to buy portions of track from PC, mainly in the Northeast Corridor, for exclusive passenger train use.

THE DAY THEY SENT THE DOME HOME

One of the most irritating matters to West Coast rail travelers is the continuing lack of dome cars on the scenic COAST STARLIGHT route between Seattle and Los Angeles, as well as on the spectacular run on the 4-times-weekly COAST DAYLIGHT between San Francisco/Oakland and Los Angeles. It is well known that Southern Pacific has adamantly refused to allow Amtrak to place conventional domes on these trains, as well as on the magnificent SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR route thru the Sierra and on the SUNSET LIMITED. In other words, SP just won't use any domes except the few it had built itself, claiming that clearances on its mountainous lines won't allow any others. The SP dome lounges exist in barely enough quantity to keep one on the SF ZEPHYR, but Amtrak has occasionally placed one on the STARLIGHT during heavy travel seasons. While they are excellent cars, they lack real front and rear viewing capability.

Critics firmly believe that SP is greatly exaggerating their case to try to keep Amtrak from showing too much success (the STARLIGHT has proven to be one of the nations's great success stories in spite of its shortcomings). They point out the very high auto-rack freight cars that use SP's routes, and the fact that the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR many times was re-routed over SP with all its Budd-built domes with no problems. SP says that because of lean and roll problems with most domes, they must be dispatched under special train orders, as do auto-rack cars, and SP can't be bothered with such inconveniences.

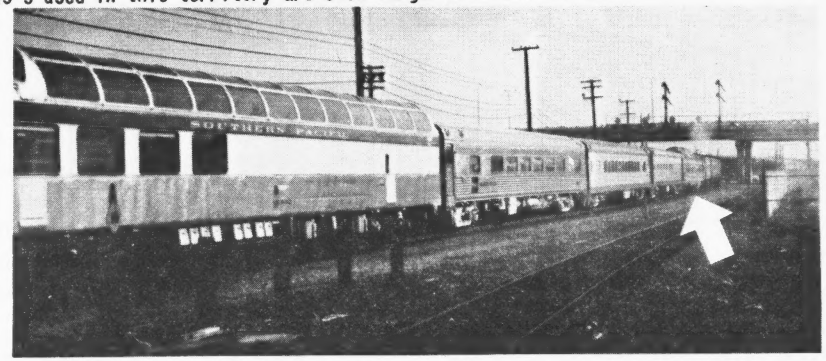


Questioned about the matter recently, Amtrak replied that there simply aren't enough domes around to run one on every train, sidestepping the real issue of SP refusal (in actual fact, Amtrak has purchased at least 99 domes, plenty for every train).

Now if the rumor reported elsewhere in this issue is true, Amtrak will run ex-Milwaukee Road Skytop lounges on the STARLIGHT, providing some overhead viewing, but not true 360-degree dome visibility. (See photo above.) This may be Amtrak's way of sprucing up the train without stepping on SP's toes (or is it tentacles?).

Amtrak clearly wanted domes to run on the route, and the corporation selected a low-profile dome, "Moonlight Dome," built by Hamburg Industries and used most recently by SCL, to try out. SP gave it some tests and pronounced it unuseable. The adjoining photos show the car being sent back where it came from on the CITY OF S.F. (later renamed the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR) last May 15.

In the photo above, as the train makes ready to depart Oakland, note the dome, partly obscured by the 16th St. Tower. Observe its low profile and especially its height relative to engine projections on the F unit ahead of it. Recall that SDP-45's used in this territory are even larger than these F's.



In the next photo, the train is pulling out, and one of the SP dome lounges is seen at the left. The arrow marks the little SCL car at the head end. Is somebody's leg being pulled around here? Is SP still running the show, or is Amtrak really doing its legally-mandated job of providing proper rail service for the citizens of the U.S.?

The Skytop lounge cars would look nice on the STARLIGHT, and would attract attention and comment. But will we ever see a day when full-fledged dome cars run on the West Coast?

TAKE A RIDE ON THE READING by Ken Maylath

Heeding that familiar advice found on every Monopoly game board, I decided to check out the offerings of that financially pressed non-Amtrak carrier primarily known for its Philadelphia commuter runs, the Reading. Altho it may often be overlooked, the Reading Company's several short commuter runs are supplemented by three longer routes, the longest of which stretches almost 95 miles to the community of Pottsville, up in Pennsylvania coal country. This run even beats, by a few miles, the route from Reading Terminal to Newark, with the 57-mile stretch to Bethlehem coming in third.

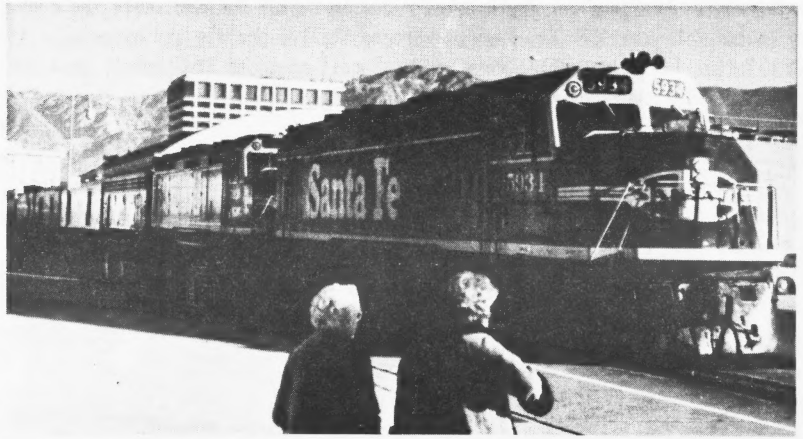
Altho the Reading dropped out of serious contention on the New York run years ago, two weekday round trips are still operating, primarily for the benefit of

(continued on page 14)

A STRANGE RASH OF PASSENGER TRAIN DERAILMENTS

Oddly, it started shortly after the CBS TV documentary on the sad state of tracks on the Penn Central (see our last issue). Just 2 days after that program (March 13) Auto-Train had its first derailment when a lumber truck ran into the lead engine of the southbound train at a crossing. The truck driver was killed, 27 of the 30 cars of the train derailed, one diesel unit and one car carrier caught fire, and about 20 passengers of the 318 aboard were taken to hospitals, but only four had to be admitted. With so much equipment damaged, Auto-Train cut its runs in half, running on alternate days from each end of the route. By March 25 it resumed full service by borrowing auto carriers from other railroads. (The wreck happened at Hortense, Georgia.)

The next day, Metroliner 113 was involved in a crash (see last issue) in Cheverly, Maryland, when a PC work train backed into the rear of the electric train, derailing the rear car and throwing catenary over the adjoining highway, creating a traffic jam. Thirteen people had minor injuries, and a worker was seriously injured.



Two days later (March 16) the SUPER CHIEF suffered a derailment west of Newton, Kansas. The westbound train was delayed for 2½ hours when several cars on the rear went off the rails. The rear baggage car tipped on its side, the thru sleeper from New York tilted at a 45-degree angle and a sleeper from Chicago also went off. The cars from the diner to the rear were uncoupled and left behind while the train continued on, picking up more cars on the way and making up all but 10 minutes of lost time before reaching Los Angeles. In the recent photo above, Paul Rayton pictured the SUPER CHIEF with its handsome "new" engines, a pair of blue and yellow FP-45's, followed by an F "B" unit, steam generator car, baggage, and baggage-dorm. The shot was made on a recent smogless day in Pasadena, Calif.

Two more days passed, and on March 18, in the early morning, the BROADWAY LIMITED, westbound from New York, derailed at East Palestine, Ohio, just over the state line from Pennsylvania. One man was killed--a PC engineer riding as a passenger. The 5 rear cars jumped the tracks and four of them partially overturned. The cars were nos. 3251 ("Dana") sleeper lounge, 2693 sleeper (former SP 9016), coach 4558 (ex-UP originating in Washington), sleeper 2682 (ex-SP 9002), and sleeper 2638 (ex-UP "Pacific Trail"). First reports said a "kink" in the rails could have caused the wreck, which happened in a heavy snowstorm; shortly before, a freight train had split in two at the spot, and when the brakes were applied the rear section slammed into the front, spreading the tracks. The engineer of the BROADWAY saw the bad spot but could not stop in time. Nineteen persons were taken to hospitals for treatment, and most of them were taken back aboard at Salem, Ohio as the front section of the train resumed its trip to Chicago.

Highway Deaths

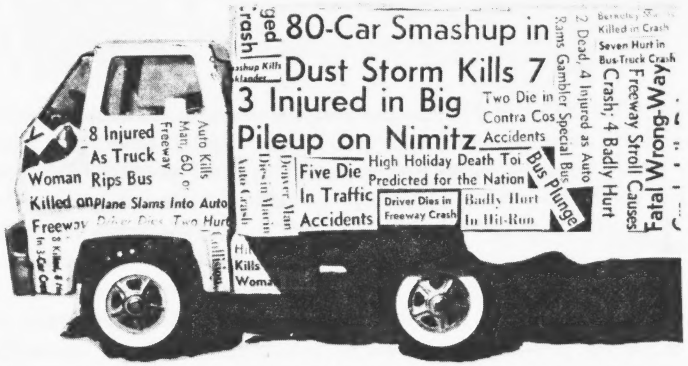
CAN RAIL TRAVEL SOLVE OUR TRANSPORTATION CRISIS?

by James Russell

The "RTN Death Machine" on the cover of this issue is intended to highlight the ever-present problem of the horrible massacre going on on the nation's highways. It's not meant to indicate that trucks are mainly responsible for it--a truck body simply provided a convenient display medium for the gruesome newspaper headlines that assault all of us daily until our sensibilities are dulled.

What has happened to us? How are we able to accept the incredible fact that every ten minutes some person is meeting violent, unexpected death on our streets and freeways? In the entire Vietnam war, 45,000 Americans were killed. Yet every single year 55,000 or more innocent victims are being slaughtered right here under our eyes, and we are doing nothing effective about it, and neither are we complaining loudly or seeming even to notice. The country is in the grip of the Highway Lobby monster, and while things worsen daily, Federal bureaucrats and do-nothing legislators turn their heads away and even attempt to persuade us that things are improving. Last year the highway death toll soared to new heights, yet we are told that the death rate really dropped, since people drove more and hence the number of deaths per mile traveled was lower!

How cruel, how unthinking, how inhumane can one be to try to justify this highway slaughter by manipulating statistics about! The statistics won't help the 56,300 poor victims whose lives were cut short! Their only purpose can be to lie to the American people about the dangers that face all of us daily. Big auto manufacturers, big oil

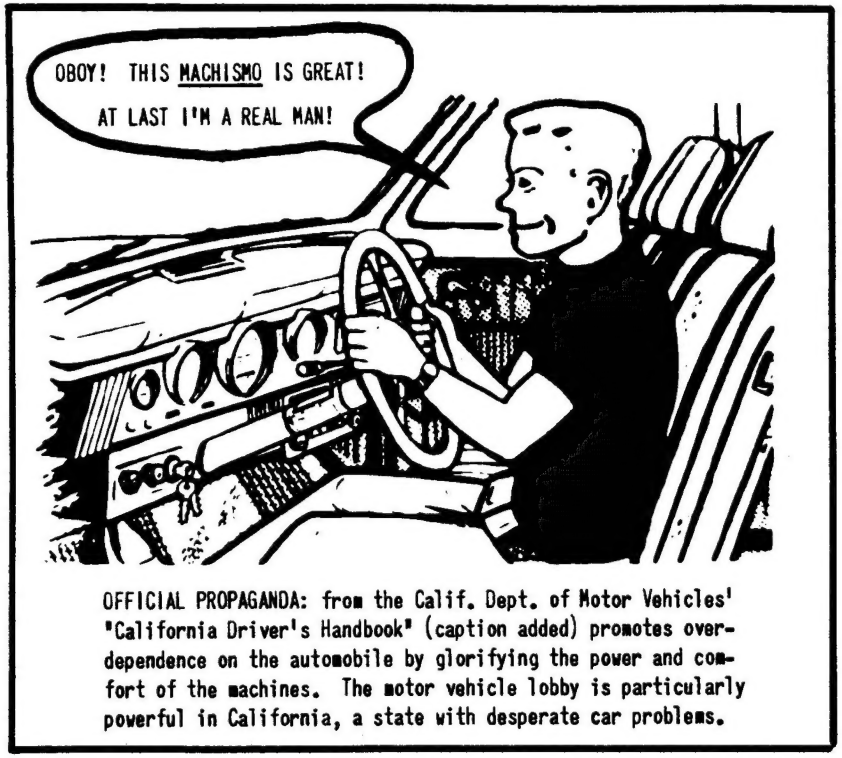


corporations, big highway equipment manufacturers, big tire companies, big trucking concerns--all these members of the Highway Lobby turn their backs on the inhumanity of our present transportation chaos and look selfishly at the inflated profits that our unbelievable over-emphasis on the private automobile has brought them.

Just a few decades ago we had a balanced transportation system. One need only look thru a National Geographic Magazine of the twenties, thirties or forties to note the serenity of life reflected there. People enjoyed traveling then more than now. There was a great variety of modes of transportation to choose from. There was more unspoiled country to visit--still undamaged by the rape of the bulldozer.

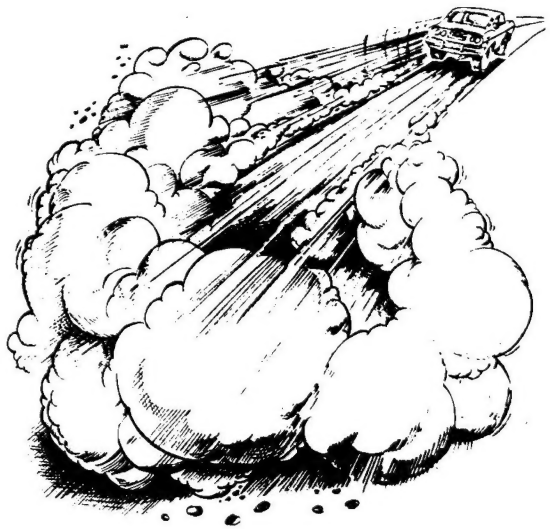
Cities were more in scale with the needs of people. The ugly, hulking freeway ramps that now deface our cities and towns everywhere were happily nonexistent. Trains went everywhere, and travel was novel and stimulating. The interstate highways had not yet brought the stultifying uniformity that now urges travelers to escape to Europe or the South Seas to experience variety and serenity. No wonder there is such a surge of nostalgia for bygone things in our land! No wonder there are such frustration and violence in our unlivable cities!

For now we have the choice of quick death or slow death, both brought to us courtesy of the great god Automobilia. If you don't die violently in a car wreck, you'll be poisoned slowly by the noxious fumes of the infernal machines, or develop heart trouble from the stress of noise and traffic.



OFFICIAL PROPAGANDA: from the Calif. Dept. of Motor Vehicles' "California Driver's Handbook" (caption added) promotes over-dependence on the automobile by glorifying the power and comfort of the machines. The motor vehicle lobby is particularly powerful in California, a state with desperate car problems.

Recently the editor of a train magazine spoke out against cars. He was stimulated to do so by a personal tragedy--a railfan friend lay near death in a coma from a highway crash that instantly killed the fan's mother. The editor is Freeman Hubbard of Railroad Magazine, who wrote in the April 1973 issue: "Any machine which kills, as the automobile does, over 50,000 Americans a year and injures at least 300,000 others (Ed. note: actually the official estimate is at least 2 million injured yearly!) is an enemy of the human race. If the auto had just been invented and its grim casualty rate were known in advance, the manufacture and sale of such vehicles would be forbidden by law... But even aside from its grisly toll of violent death, the auto is a public menace. Its gas exhaust shortens life by poisoning



Objectionable automobile ad from a foreign manufacturer for U.S. distribution glorifies speed, pollution, reckless driving. Some control of automobile advertising seems essential if this nation is ever to establish a satisfactory transportation system. We would, of course, recommend voluntary ad cleanups rather than legal intervention.

the air we breathe. Its macadamized roads devour millions of acres of wild-flowered meadows and woodland that we need for healthy living. Its 'convenience' makes adults too lazy to walk a couple of blocks to buy a Sunday newspaper and kids too physically weakened to enjoy a half-mile stroll to and from school. Although outdoor exercise is a vital necessity, hiking has become a lost art for too many people, thanks to the motor vehicle.

"Beauty, too, is important. But city streets and curbs cluttered with autos and the highways often jammed by heavy traffic are ugly, noisy, and bad-smelling as well as dangerous. Add to all these things the irritation of bumper-to-bumper driving, difficult parking, and the constant care and expense of keeping your car in good repair and operating it, and you begin to wonder why you ever bought that car in the first place..."

Mr. Hubbard went on to say that he and his wife sold their last car over ten years ago and have used public transportation since that time--rail and air, plus occasional short hikes. He says, "You couldn't get us to drive a car again even if you gave us a free Jaguar. The money we have saved as a result permits us to travel through the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and overseas. Since 1962 we have toured all five continents, plus half a dozen tropical islands, and we feel happier and safer without owning an automobile. This nation needs more trains and streetcars but fewer motor vehicles."

We salute Mr. Hubbard for his courageous stance against the automobile, and we offer our sympathies for the tragedy befalling his friend. Because tragedy is becoming so commonplace in our lives, we tend to be unmoved as we read daily of the unspeakable slaughter on the roads. For this reason we wanted to try to make plainer, if we could, the real enormity of the highway hell. We wondered what any one individual's chances of surviving the year without being killed or maimed in an auto wreck were. Using current statistics, we made some calculations and concluded that--although RTN is still a small publication--at least one of our good

Male Chauvinism on a U.S. postage stamp before the term was coined. Among its bevy of faults, the automobile is a sexist machine, and Detroit has unfortunately played this to the hilt in its advertising, thus creating an artificial demand for cars that compounds transport problems.

readers would be killed on the road this year, under the rules of probability. And no less than thirty readers of RTN this year are likely to be maimed or injured on the highways!

Statisticians have estimated that some time on July 10 of this year the two millionth American to die violently in motor vehicle wrecks since the introduction of the car to this country will see his or her end. During the past half century more than 100 million Americans have been injured seriously in auto crashes. What is the solution to this still-growing menace? Officials try to soothe us with statements that air pollution and death rates are getting better, but with our own eyes we see that things are worsening. Auto production is reaching all-time peaks. People are spending greater and greater proportions of their total waking and sleeping hours locked inside their dangerous vehicles.

Can an increase in passenger train usage do anything significant toward this problem? It is highly unlikely, given the magnitude of the situation. But at least Americans should have the option of different modes of ground travel--everyone should not be forced to use the hideous highways of America for every trip. The Harris poll made for Amtrak last year showed that Americans overwhelmingly supported the need for the option of rail travel, even if government support was needed. This must be provided, and we are fearful that the Department of Transportation is moving in the wrong direction. While giving lip service to Amtrak, the administration is really moving backwards because it should be taking the bold step right now of expanding rail service widely. Instead it is recommending cutting back routes and holding the line while the auto mess grows at a steadily mounting rate.

To really balance our transportation system, two basic policies are needed: (1) a crash program should be initiated at once for wide expansion of passenger train service with new equipment to be ordered quickly, to build our rail system up to the standards of other major nations; (2) a general policy must be adopted of reducing the total number of cars now on the highways. This second step is essential but never discussed seriously. Only by such means will we ever restore the serenity that prevailed in earlier years. Relieve the tension, eliminate the pollution, cut the slaughter, open up options and new freedom to the American traveler. Our country should be becoming great again as we move toward its two-hundredth birthday.

AMTRAK RELEASES FEBRUARY RIDERSHIP DATA

Amtrak released to the press March 28 average daily ridership data for all its trains for the month of February. Excerpted below are some of these data, for major trains and those of special interest, omitting most corridor trains. Where more than one figure is given for a train, it indicates it operates over more than one railroad, and separate counts are taken on each road. The figure 5 for train 16 is not a misprint.

TRAIN & NUMBER	AVE. PSGRS/DAY
SUNSET #1	178
SUNSET #2	197
SUPER CHIEF #3	87
SUPER CHIEF #4	149
SF ZEPHYR #5	188 BN
	128 UP
	181 SP
SF ZEPHYR #6	168 BN
	115 UP
	217 SP
EMPIRE BLDR #7	128 Milw
	267 BN
EMPIRE BLDR #8	130 Milw
	281 BN
N.C. HIAWATHA #9	142 Milw
	194 BN
N.C. HIAWATHA #10	136 Milw
	176 BN
STARLIGHT #11-12	220 BN
	386 SP
STARLIGHT #13-14	145 BN
	352 SP
DAYLIGHT #12	133
DAYLIGHT #13	146
TEXAS CHIEF #15	98
TEXAS CHIEF #16	5
INTER-AMER. #21	62 ATSF
	69 MP
INTER-AMER. #22	49 ATSF
	50 MP
NATL LTD #30-530	53 MP
	122 PC
#530	9 PC
NATL LTD #31-531	52 MP
	211 PC
#531	9 PC
BDWY LTD #40-540	198
#540	27
BDWY LTD #41-541	274
#541	26
GEO WASH #50	58 C&O
	32 PC
J.W.R. #51	67 C&O
	42 PC

TRAIN & NUMBER	AVE. PSGRS/DAY
FLORIDIAN #52	66 PC
	79 L&N
#93	43 SCL
FLORIDIAN #53	55 PC
	72 L&N
#94	56 SCL
PANAMA LTD #58	164
PANAMA LTD #59	270
MONTREALER #60	593
WASHINGTONIAN #61	462
SILVER STAR #81-91	165 PC
	178 RF&P
	240 SCL
#91	108 SCL
SILVER STAR #82-92	144 PC
	129 RF&P
	163 SCL
#92	78 SCL
SILVER METEOR #83	208 PC
	182 RF&P
	184 SCL
SILVER METEOR #84	183 PC
	156 RF&P
	171 SCL
CHAMPION #85	163 PC
	167 RF&P
	209 SCL
CHAMPION #86	170 PC
	155 RF&P
	112 SCL
VACATIONER #95	304 PC
	115 RF&P
	172 SCL
VACATIONER #96	150 PC
	142 RF&P
	197 SCL
NIGHT OWL #168	384
NIGHT OWL #169	500
PAC INT'L #194	42
PAC INT'L #197	63
POTOMAC SPEC #640-642	71
POTOMAC SPEC #641-643	196

(continued from page 7)

long distance commuters who find the Reading route more convenient to their needs than the Penn Central. These are handled by Rail Diesel Cars, equipped with snack sections for Continental Breakfast and beverages. Reading's other "long distance" runs are also largely RDC affairs, but with a level of service that is close to what was offered ten years ago. They are also less commuter-oriented, with serice available throughout the day. (There are six weekday round trips to Bethlehem and five to Pottsville, with two others going as far as Reading.)

I decided on a round trip from Reading Terminal to Pottsville, listed as 93.6 miles. To make the only Sunday morning departure, at 9:15, I left Baltimore on the first Metroliner from Washington. As expected, this turned out to be lightly patronized indeed, with perhaps 50 people in the entire four cars as we left Baltimore. After reaching Philadelphia's 30th St. Station a couple minutes late, a quick cab ride thru the nearly deserted streets of downtown Philly took me to Reading Terminal in plenty of time to board a pair of comparatively new model RDC's. Reading Terminal, with its high arching roof--somewhat unique in this day and age--reminds one of European rail terminals.

With a fair scattering of passengers, we left on time and arrived at the end of the primary commuter zone at Norristown 30 mins later, after only two stops. Crossing the river at Norristown, we joined the freight line that follows the other shore from downtown Philadelphia. After the somewhat bouncy track to Norristown, the ride was better now, including some sections of welded rail along the mostly double track route. Overall, track conditions were pretty good, even along the route between Reading and Pottsville. But few speed records can be set, given the twisting and turning of the track thru hilly terrain. An occasional burst of 60 or so was tops.

Our arrival in Reading, which along with Pottstown produced the most passengers, was a couple minutes ahead of the 10:41 shown in the timetable. On some Pottsville runs, including this one, a change of trains is necessary in Reading. We traded our pair of RDC's for a single car and were on our way 8 mins later. The Reading has closed its outer terminal station at Reading, located on the north side of town, now concentrating its passenger activity at the downtown Franklin Street facility. As we rolled thru the extensive yards in North Reading, I recalled boarding one of the famous Reading Rambles there some years ago.

I wasn't the only one, it turned out, making the run "for the heck of it." Several fellows carrying an assortment of cameras turned out to be rail enthusiasts out for a run on the line. As we got farther into the hills, the occasional snow flurries of the morning gave way to a late season snowfall. The white stuff, with a brisk wind, made one glad to have dressed warmly for the layover in Pottsville, even if the official beginning of spring was but a few days away.

Our arrival in Pottsville was a minute or so after the 11:39 in the timetable. The Reading doesn't fool with a lot of recovery time in its schedules--a minute or two, perhaps, but that's it. And many of the runs to Bethlehem and Pottsville are completed in at least a few minutes less than was the case several years ago.

The return trip was due to start at 1:22 from the small, unprotected platform in Pottsville--and did. A good load of passengers out of there--more than on the upbound trip, as expected. Even tho the stops were the same, our schedule was several minutes tighter going back to Reading, and we arrived a couple minutes after the 2:10 listing. Again a changeover to a different train--trading our single RDC for a pair. Just 3 minutes allowed for the change--and it was done in 2½. On thru Birdsboro, Pottstown, Royersford. Right back on schedule there. Norristown on time at 3:08. Our engineer really kept us moving between there and Reading Terminal, with the result that we arrived a couple minutes early--at 3:34.

The Reading's "long distance" operations are less than overwhelming compared with Amtrak's, but they do seem to provide a useful service for the residents of Eastern Pennsylvania. Good-sized cities such as Bethlehem and Reading have no

other passenger service. Even tho highways have improved in that area, I think Reading is an asset--a plus factor for transportation, aside from the short commuter runs around Philadelphia. It seems pretty reliable and comfortable. Many of the short commuter runs still feature vintage MU cars, but passengers on the longer routes ride in some of the newest RDC cars around. They fit well in an area that realized before most that complete reliance on highways would not solve today's transportation problems--an area that was willing to make a commitment by government to a modern, integrated rail transportation setup.

GOING WHERE THE GREAT TRAINS ARE THIS YEAR?

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* STUDENT-RAILPASS: You're eligible if you are a regular full-time student at an American high school, college or university and not over 25 years old. There is just one price, $150 for 2 months of unlimited Second Class travel in the same 13 countries as the regular EURAILPASS: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.
WHAT TO SEND: Besides your remittance, send your name, address, date of birth (month, day, year), passport number, and a signed statement from your school that you meet the above requirements. Also tell us the date you want your pass limit to start, as it must take effect on the date you select. Be sure to tell us about your adventures later.

MOHUN TRAVEL c/o RTN
Box 9007
Berkeley, Calif. 94709

Mixed Train of Thoughts

YOU'RE NOT READING this column closely enough. No one picked out the error in our last issue: the OVERNIGHT OWL, not the OVERNIGHT LARK, was one of the former Dallas-Houston trains on SP..... BADLY NEEDED LETTERS of local support for the proposed SF ZEPHYR stop in Truckee, Calif. should be sent to Amtrak regional manager David Rosier, c/o Union Passenger Terminal, 800 N. Alameda, Los Angeles CA 90012. Seems some snag (wouldn't you expect it with SP?) has developed in setting up the stop, and that it presently won't make the April 29 starting date. Letters also are needed to show that enough local transportation exists to move train passengers from Truckee to ski areas, hotels, etc... SANTA FE PRESIDENT John Reed rode the SUPER CHIEF recently with his family and was reportedly upset by what Amtrak's been doing with his best train. The train started late, there were complaints about the food and family members caught cold from heating problems. There is a rumor that some connection exists between this event and the replacement of the F units on the SUPER with the more powerful and reliable FP-45's (see photo, p.8)..... WE FORGOT TO Department: We didn't mention that Amtrak issued a consolidated regional timetable for Feb. 15. Most stations are currently using it as the main schedule to hand out. It has the usual recent format and covers most routes with the major exception of the Northeast Corridor and the MONTREALER. It's effective thru April 28, so Amtrak's next big timetable change will be April 29..... WHEN THE FLORIDIAN returns to its evening departure times from Chicago & Miami April 29, it will again run combined with the SILVER STAR in Florida. Cars will be shuffled in Jacksonville, with the Miami section running via Wildwood and the St. Pete cars via Orlando. No more switching at Auburndale..... THE EASTBOUND HIAWATHA is supposed to get a later operating time, but no details are available. This summer the HIAWATHA and EMPIRE BUILDER are to run as separate trains between Spokane & Seattle, but nothing definite has been heard on the rumored connection to Portland... NORTHEAST CORRIDOR ADJUSTMENTS in the April 29 timetable should be fairly numerous, many linked with another schedule change of the BAY STATE (N.Y-Boston via Springfield), the latter partly due to the wishes of subsidizing state Massachusetts..... WASHINGTON MTA ANNOUNCED in March agreement on using B&O right of way for the Metro line between Washington and Silver Spring. Groundbreaking was to occur March 26. The two present tracks (used by B&O commuter runs as well as the POTOMAC SPECIAL) will be relocated with the Metro tracks to be built between them..... DIRECTOR OF SALES for Amtrak is newly-appointed Roger W. Brown of Oakton, VA, Amtrak announced on March 19. He will supervise the regional and district sales managers and sales representatives and report to Harold L. Graham, VP-Marketing. He has been with Amtrak since summer 1971 as Director of Personnel and of Labor Relations..... ON-TIME PERFORMANCE for the Amtrak system in February was released March 28. The overall percentage changed little from January, rising half a point to 66.7, with the NY-DC conventional trains the best performing at 97.6% on time. Worst was the PANAMA LIMITED which rose from zero to 1.7% on time..... LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE published an amazingly upbeat article on Amtrak riding in the March issue (see QUOTES, p. 19). It even listed a page of trips and excursions out of L.A. with many details. Quote: "On an early spring afternoon, with the sea outside your window and a full weekend ahead, it doesn't really matter whether you get to San Francisco in one hour or ten hours"..... TIME MAGAZINE HAD a good summary of Amtrak to date, including the DOT recommendations, in the March 26 issue, quite positive in tone..... CBS TELEVISION DEVOTED a third of their "60 Minutes" program the week after the Amtrak show (see last issue) to letters about Amtrak, but we missed the program..... THE D&H SESQUICENTENNIAL is being celebrated with an excursion from Albany to Montreal the end of April, and our own Peter Roehm will be riding business car 200. A display train will tour the railway April 23-May 12, pulled by the famous Alco PA engines.....

NOTICE

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UP LAST RUN PHOTOS
INFORMATION ON ABOVE TRAINS
OR WHO MAY

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QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"It is interesting that the United States is the only major industrialized country in the world not actively engaged in improving rail passenger service."

--Edwin P. Patton in Passenger Train Journal, March 1973

"While the Department of Transportation continues to study the long-term role of AMTRAK it recommends that the effort be continued along the present lines and that the Congress enact legislation prior to July 1, 1973, authorizing Federal grants and loan guarantees to carry the program forward on the basis of the system recommended in this report. The President's FY 1974 budget request includes appropriate funding for this purpose."

--From DOT's March 15 report on Amtrak

"The public can take cheer from the Nixon administration's reported decision to give Amtrak two more years in which to save that endangered species, the passenger train. However, ... Amtrak may take warning from an accompanying recommendation to Congress that four money-losing routes... be dropped. The warning is: The government will not long be patient with money-losing operations."

--Chicago Tribune editorial, March 19

"Our diner on the Coast Daylight is filled with all ages, colors, lifestyles. Young people actually outnumber the elderly. So does an affluent-looking mix in their 40s and 50s. The railroad management mind, rooted so firmly in the past and nurtured on outdated statistics, seems not to have the foggiest notion of new winds blowing thru world travel and tourism."

--Frank Riley in Los Angeles magazine, March

"It's little wonder that the Penn Central is political poison ivy, untouchable by almost everyone who is anyone in Washington. Given the conflicting interests, virtually anything the government does about Penn Central will offend powerful forces or create a public relations disaster."

--Robert J. Samuelson, Washington Post, March 11

"Gil Boulde found a job crop dusting on BART. Gil is one of those people who would rather fly than drive anyday. Last Tuesday he was browsing thru the morning help wanted ads en route from Coliseum to Berkeley when he found just the kind of job he'd been looking for. He cut his trip short, phoned from the booth at the MacArthur station and got an interview that afternoon. Riding BART could turn out to be lucky for you, too. But you'll never know, unless you try it."

--From a current BART ad

Urban-Suburban Transit

ROBERT J. SWAN writes: "Just about everyone fell for the artist conceptions of swooshing monorails, the implementation of which in the Los Angeles River bed was the mission of the first L.A. Metropolitan Transit Authority. But this monorail would compete with existing carriers, including the Red Cars, so the MTA was empowered to take them over. But the monorail panacea persisted, and the last of the Red Cars was abandoned. The MTA changed its stripes, became the So. Cal. Rapid Transit District, with other counties begging out in alarm. Thus we now have the SCRTD confined to L.A. County. For political reasons, the MTA staff would not cite the reasons for monorail's being unacceptable for a long time. And the SCRTD has just reviewed all the transit technology again." Many people are wondering if Southern California will ever have a solution to its transit problems. Vice President Agnew March 20 prescribed rapid transit as a solution to the area's transportation woes.